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of a grain. It is used in the following manner. The body to be weighed, is suspended by a fine gold wire or common hair, to the graduated slide, d, attached to the spiral wire or spring C. The slide is immediately drawn down, so as to show the number of grains opposite the point of the index E. This being the weight under the pressure of the atmosphere is noted, the body O, still suspended at the slide is then plunged into a proper vessel F, filled with the standard fluid, part of the weight being thus taken off, the spring retracts and shows in an instant the loss of weight.

For taking the specific gravity of fluids this instrument is also very convenient; a piece of glass, of known weight, suspended at the spring, and immersed in the liquor, shows instantly the proportion of weight, one fluid bears to another. Now as the strength of spirits, and various commodities increases inversely as their weight, I would beg leave to recommend this mode of examining them, to the attention of the spirit-merchant, and the public in general; not from any desire of ostentation, but from the conviction of proposing a simple, cheap, and speedy method which any one may easily understand, and improve. This instrument so plainly adapted to all those purposes, may be constructed for a few shillings; the principal point is to use a spiral wire, or spring, of a determinate kind, the diameter, weight, and elasticity of which shall be uniform.

J. MURRAY, Surgeon.

Church-street, Jan. 26, 1809.

For the Belfast Monthly Magazine.

ON ORIGINALITY OF THINKING, AND
THE FASHIONABLE CHANGES OF PUBLIC OPINION.

IF fashion confined its influence to the cut of a coat, the size of a hat, or the variations of female dress, it might often be preposterous without producing much injury; but when it attempts to control opinions, and form them to one model, in such instances, its "ideot sway" should be resisted. Originality of thinking, or an independence of judgment is a

rare qualification: so rare indeed, that some have attempted to libel human nature, by asserting that the multitude are incapable of forming deliberate opinions, and only fitted to follow in the train of a few, who are privileged to think for them. The people have brought this opprobrium on themselves, because by not exerting this privilege of forming a deliberate judgment they appear to superficial observers, who argue from the disuse against the existence of this faculty, as if they did not actually possess the power, or the right of private judgment. They too implicitly follow a few leaders of public opinion, and receive the *tone* from them, while if the capability of such directors who take the lead were critically examined, their qualifications might justly be called in question. At the era of the reformation, Lutheranism was fashionable in one place and Calvinism in another, while the old fashion continued to prevail in other places, and thus the perception of truth might be supposed to be influenced by geographical circles. We cannot suppose if the people had individually examined for themselves, that opinions would be so generally embraced, as if they were nationally decided on. The influence of sects over their respective adherents may also be adduced to prove the force of fashion over opinion. Most remain in the profession in which they were educated, without confirming their assent by future examination, or expressing their dissent by separating from what their matured opinions may lead them to think erroneous. The exercise of private judgment too often lies dormant.

I am not an old man, and yet I have known many fluctuations of public opinion. My first acquaintance with public life commenced during the American war. I well remember the agitated politics of those days, and the two rival modes of thinking then in vogue. In Ireland this was the grand era of volunteer associations. The accents of patriotism were then fashionable, but that these sentiments were in compliance with the mode, and not in the million, the result of

conviction appears evident from the changes which took place in many soon afterwards, which changes were in all probability not more founded on conviction. Some of the patriots of those days were hurried on to overstep the bounds of rational and moderate reform, and were overwhelmed in the vortex of a fashion of one kind, which proved alike destructive to them and to their schemes. An autagonist fashion arose, in which many of these *ci-devant* reformers joined, and deserted their former fashion with great indifference, proving that

“ Changing a master's like changing a glove ;”

and this counter current, or re-action of public opinion is now the prevailing mode, and we find many, who, while followers of the former fashion were loud brawlers in favour of liberty, have now become the suppliant tools of any, and every administration, who happen from whatever accidental causes to have power for the time being in their hands. Could these changes have happened so very speedily, or could conversion have been so instantaneously affected, if the opinions of these men, as well their former as their present ones, both in direct opposition to each other, had been the result of deliberate inquiry?

A few have preserved “ the noiseless tenor of their way,” neither giving up the cause of reform, because excesses have been committed under its name, nor attempting to enforce measures right in themselves by the improper use of force, or to coerce others to adopt their measures ; but who seek to promote “ virtuous ends only by virtuous means.” These are, however, an unfashionable sect, and despised by the leaders of the present fashions, who, when they condescend to speak of them represent them as incendiaries and promoters of discord, though on a just appreciation of their views, those moderate reformers are the best friends to tranquillity, because they wish to promote amelioration and consequent content, and are restrained from using force, as their leading principle is, that all force operates against reform, by pro-

ducing a re-action which counteracts it. Persuasion and attempts gradually to enlighten are the only weapons such reformers can use, consistently with their own principles.

The periodical prints have a very great influence in leading public opinion. They often artfully contrive to inflame prejudices, by stating what they think will be agreeable to their readers, and thus increase the sale of their papers ; and avoid the publication of blunt unpleasant truths, lest their pecuniary interests should suffer. Many readers take upon trust what they thus are accustomed to see daily ; and insensibly form their taste accordingly. By acting in this manner they save themselves from “ the unsupportable fatigue of thought,” and implicitly receive the manufactured sentiments, which they find ready made up to their hand. This is one powerful instrument of leading the public taste, and we find the sentiments of a majority of readers are influenced by the tone of the periodical prints, which they are in the habit of reading :

“ Gutta cavat lapidem, non vi, sed sæpe cadendo ;”

It is the frequent reiteration of the drop, not the force, which at length wears the stone.

The prevailing fashion of the present day is to promote the war system, and if we may judge of the future from the past, the consequences of this direction of public opinion is likely to prove ruinous to our best interests. Many are interested in the continuance of war by the emoluments which they or their relatives draw from it. Contractors, fathers and brothers of military and naval officers abound every where, these naturally wish for the continuance of the sources whence they draw their profit, and *self-denial* is so unfashionable an accomplishment that few are found to prefer public advantage to private gain. These numerous classes are sufficient to give a direction to public opinion especially when the bulk of the people will not be at the pains to scrutinize the dictates of fashionable opinion. Hence arises the notion that this war differs from all former wars, and that such is the ambition and despotism of Bona-

parte, that no solid peace can be made with him; so that the reprobaters of other wars affect to consider the warfare in which these countries are now engaged as of a peculiar and distinct nature. The present bishop of London (Porteus) some years ago stigmatized war in the following just and appropriate terms:

..... "One murder made a villain;
Millions a hero. Princes were privileg'd
To kill, and numbers sanctified the crime.
Ah! why will kings forget that they are
men?
And men that they are brethren? Why
delight
In human sacrifice? Why burst the ties
Of nature that should knit their souls
together
In one soft bond of amity and love?
Yet still they breathe destruction, still
go on,
Inhumanly ingenious, to find out
New pains for life, new terrors for the
grave?
Artificers of death!"

Yet this same bishop in a change of times, when the Earl of Stanhope quoted these expressions in a debate in the house of Lords, and asked if these were still the bishop's sentiments, replied in a low voice, "they were not written to mark the present war;" alas!

"Manners with honours, humours change
with climes,
Tenets with books, and principles with
times."

But it certainly requires much deliberation and hesitation before we admit it as an axiom, that this war differs from all others in principle, and in the impracticability of making peace. Let the advocates for war receive as much credit as they can ask for the ambition of Bonaparte. Let them uncontradicted call him despot, or whatever other hard name they please. He certainly is a conqueror, and doubtless has many of the vices of that character; but what has opposition effected but an increase of his power? Every successive year of the long protracted contest against France, as a republic, an oligarchy and a monarchy, has proved the melancholy truth that her power has been annually strengthened and consolidated. What immense profusion of blood and treasure has it cost this

empire to contend thus unequally with France? Can we rationally expect that the next fifteen years will be more propitious than the fifteen years which are gone by? The desperate gamester doubles his stake every time, and after losing his last shilling, often madly continues the desperate game.

Spanish Patriotism, and Spanish Patriots were of late very fashionable phrases. Probably in the succeeding vocabulary of fashion, these expressions may not so frequently be found; it is the nature of fashion often to praise its objects though they may not possess merit, and afterwards to decry the very same things with equal levity of judgment.

The infatuated war-whoop is often increased by the mercantile speculator. The current of affairs have hitherto been in favour of speculation, because the progress of the war has favoured the importing merchant, by enhancing the prices of the articles of importation; but the manufacturer has suffered in many cases very severely; the rich farmer has also generally succeeded well, but the middling and poorer classes, especially those who cannot bring large capitals to their aid have suffered exceedingly. The rich merchant who has made his thousands and his tens of thousands by his speculations, says "all is well," and because his coffers swell, adds, "the country is happy, and increasing in wealth;" but what say the less successful candidates for wealth, the smaller traders, who constitute in every state the bulk of the people! They must pay the taxes occasioned by the war, and in the language of that kind hearted benevolent, and deeply regretted statesman, Charles James Fox, whose political situation was some times at variance with his better judgment, when the minister triumphed over the man, "they must be contented from the pressure of times, to go from the second to the third story, or even to the garret." It is justly feared, that the weight of taxes and bad trade, the legitimate effects of war, have forced many from the garret down to the cellar. Ask if the present ruinous system of commercial warfare has not forced many of the manufacturers of England, the victims of her

overgrown and morbid commerce, into this situation? and at the expiration of a few short months, if the Orders in Council cause the continuance of the American Embargo, and we do not receive ample supplies of flax-seed for next spring's sowing, let us inquire if our linen weavers and spinners will not be similarly distressed. The welfare of the staple trade of the north of Ireland is endangered by the commercial war in which we are engaged.

I shall give a few excellent lines, descriptive of our present state, from an anonymous imitation of the 8th Satire of Juvenal, published a few years ago, with which I lately met much to my satisfaction. They justly mark the present tendency to elevate the higher ranks, and depress still more the lower and middling classes of society.

"There meet the extremes of rank; there social art

Has level'd mankind by their selfish heart—

There no contented middle class we trace,
The sole ambition to be rich and base,
Some o'er their native element elate,
Like ice-formed islands, tow'rd in frozen state,

Repel all nature with their gelid breath,
And what seems harbour is the jaw of death.

The wretched mass beat down, the struggling mind,
Nor see nor feel their country, or their kind:

But bow the back, and bend the eye to earth,
And strangle feeling in its infant birth;
Thro' all extends one sterile swamp of soul,

And fogs of apathy invest the whole."

The world appears to be divided into two classes, the *dupers* and the *duped*. The former make up for the smallness of their number by their superior dexterity, and their acting together in compact and by a kind of concert. The latter can only recover the long withheld rights of private judgment, by a moderate temperate assertion of their claims, and by calmly using their endeavours to increase their stock of knowledge and information. They then would not resign the important privilege of thought, nor would wars be carried on for the aggrandizement of the *few* to the oppression of the *many*. K.

To the Editor of the Belfast Magazine.

SIR,
WHEN I suggested a few hints on the subject of saving bees during winter, I omitted mentioning the feeding of them, not because I was not aware of its importance, but because I conceived that observations on that point would more properly appear in a future number. The best time for feeding bees, is, I apprehend, early in spring, when upon examination, it is found, that the store laid up for the winter is not sufficient for their support, till they can procure a supply from the gardens and fields; I admit that it is proper to examine the hives immediately after the working season is over; that is the time when the proprietor is to determine which hives he ought to keep for the ensuing season; for it is extremely wrong to suffer hives not intended for stocks to remain after this period. Bees will consume more honey in one month towards the end of autumn, than during the whole winter. But I am of opinion, that it is best to leave such hives as it is proper to keep till the next season, with the store which has been collected, till toward spring when they are to be attended to, and fed, if necessary. It is not worth keeping a hive that does not weigh from 18 to 20 pounds, and a hive of this weight will in general be found to have a sufficient supply of honey, especially if there be a long continuance of cold, severe weather during the winter months; if there should happen to be much mild open weather, during winter, the bees will consume more honey; but it is time enough to examine early in spring, whether they have, or have not a competent supply: the exception to this is, when for some particular reason, we wish to keep a weak hive till the next season. In this case, it is necessary to grant the bees an immediate supply of honey, after the working season is over, to prevent them perishing, as sometimes happens, before the winter sets in, or during the winter months. It is not to be expected however, that hives which it is necessary to supply in this manner will repay the proprietor for his trouble and